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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LAMAR ALEXANDER, a Senator from the State of Tennessee.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray. Eternal Spirit, who brings a rich harvest with Your footsteps, mountains melt in Your presence. You are robed with honor and majesty. We praise Your name and celebrate Your goodness. Remind us that without Your help, there is no national security. May we focus less on what we can accomplish and more on Your unstoppable providence. Send Your peace into the hearts of our Senators. Take away distracting worries and fill them with faith. Cleanse them from any bitter or unforgiving spirit as You give them contentment in serving You and this great Nation. Inspire them with the courage to work to build a world without dividing walls. We pray in Your holy name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable LAMAR ALEXANDER led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 14, 2005.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable LAMAR ALEXANDER, a Senator from the State of Tennessee, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ALEXANDER thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Today we will be returning to the Defense authorization bill. I think this is our sixth day on the bill. We spent 5 or 6 days on it several months ago. Under the consent agreement from last Thursday, we will debate the final amendments to the Defense authorization bill today and then tomorrow morning we will have a series of votes on the remaining amendments, concluding with a vote on final passage of that bill. Those amendments include two amendments relating to our policies in Iraq and second-degree amendments to the Graham amendments on the status of detainees. We will start those votes at about 10:45 tomorrow morning, and therefore we will finish the Defense authorization bill prior to our normal recess that we take on Tuesdays for our respective policy lunches.

I also want to remind my colleagues that at 4:30 today, we will begin an hour of debate on the Energy and Water appropriations conference report. This will be our sixth conference report. We have done Homeland Security, Interior, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, and then Foreign Operations. This will be No. 6 as we continue to bring these bills across the floor one by one.

We will have a vote at about 5:30 today, after an hour of debate on En-

ergy and Water appropriations. In addition to those two matters, we have a whole host of other important issues to address prior to adjourning for Thanksgiving.

The most common question I get is on the schedule and what time we will be getting out for Thanksgiving and, of course, the holidays in December as well. In the short term, this week we may consider tax reconciliation under the statutory time limitation as provided by the Budget Act. The Budget Act provides for up to 20 hours of debate on that bill, and therefore we could have late nights during this week in order to finish that tax bill. We have five remaining appropriations conference reports, and we will consider them over the course of the week as they become available. We have Defense, Labor-HHS, MILCON, the Transportation-HUD bill, and DC appropriations.

As I mentioned, we will finish the Energy and Water conference report today, and we are ready to lock in a short time agreement on the Commerce, Justice, and Science conference report, which is now at the desk.

Following that one—today we will do six—we will have done seven of the appropriations conference reports. I expect the remainder to become available over the course of the week. As they become available, we will set aside time and have, hopefully, very tight time agreements and deal with them accordingly.

In addition to the DOD authorization bill and the conference reports, we have other things to address this week. On the conference report on the PATRIOT Act, which is expected this week, there has been a lot of work done over the course of the last 2 weeks and over the course of the weekend. We will complete that prior to our Thanksgiving time away as well.

Another item that we have worked on a lot over the last 5 or 6 weeks that

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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will be back on the floor is pension legislation. We are very close to an agreement on that. We will be able to do that before Thanksgiving, as well, if we continue to make the progress that we have made over the last 2 weeks. We are hoping to reach a unanimous consent agreement that would allow the Senate to proceed on that pensions bill in a reasonable period of time.

I keep stressing reasonable period of time, keeping time requirements down, because in order to accomplish all of this, it is going to take a lot of organization, efficiency, understanding, and tolerance on the part of all of our colleagues as we go through.

Finally, I mention our continued efforts on the Executive Calendar, as well as a number of other legislative items that will be in wrapup. We will consider those nominations and clear legislation each day this week as they become available, a lot of work over a very short period of time.

That gets us through this week. Then people ask, what about next week? Until we see the pacing over the next several days, it is going to be impossible for me to really know exactly when we are going to be out. But I remain hopeful that we can work through the issues that I just mentioned and finish this week.

The next question: When does this week end? Does it end Friday afternoon, Saturday, or Sunday? I cannot answer that yet until we get a little bit further.

There is a chance we could do all of that by late Friday afternoon. However, if it becomes necessary to stay longer, either into the weekend on Saturday or into next week, then we will certainly do just that. Senators are going to have to remain flexible with their schedules beyond Friday. I do want to at least throw out that a week-end schedule would be possible because I know a lot of people have things scheduled. So please keep your calendars flexible.

In December, I can also say the following just for planning purposes, and that is that we will not be in for votes in December before Monday, December 12. I will not know until later this week, Saturday night or maybe Monday night of next week exactly what the plans will be for the week beginning December 12. So again I ask our colleagues to keep their schedule flexible in case we have no choice but to return sometime during that week.

What I have just said is going to stir the pot with lots of questions coming forward, but that is about as much as I know right now. I will share the information on schedule with colleagues as soon as it becomes apparent to me based on how much work we get done today, tomorrow, the next day, and over the course of this week.

On another issue, but related to the bill that we are returning to shortly, we are resuming consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006, day No. 6, and we will complete

that bill tomorrow. I do want to thank Senator WARNER for his steady leadership. Under the guidance of our chairman, we have been able to proceed in a very orderly and smooth manner on a very important bill.

Last month, I sent a request to the minority leader asking for his agreement to keep amendments limited to issues that are important to our military personnel and armed services and that are within the jurisdiction of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Fortunately, we were able to reach agreement and do just that. I do want to thank our colleagues for their patience and cooperation in allowing us to move forward on a bill that is central to America's national security.

MOMENTOUS AND HISTORIC TIMES FOR AMERICA

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, these are momentous and historic times for America. In just 4 years, we have toppled two of the most brutal regimes in human history and liberated 50 million people from tyranny. Afghanistan and Iraq are now governed by the consent of the people under constitutions that have been ratified by the popular vote. Many people simply would not have believed that just several years ago.

Next month, on December 15, the Iraqi people will vote to form a permanent government. On that day, they will show, once more, their tremendous courage, boldness, and fortitude in moving their country toward full democracy and independence.

While the news media focuses on the terrorist activity and the terrorist insurgency, by any standard of history, Iraq and Afghanistan are making remarkable progress. Only 4 years ago, Saddam Hussein and the Taliban seemed like permanent, malignant fixtures in the Middle East, but today Saddam sits in prison on trial for his life, and the Taliban no longer rules the Afghani people.

Meanwhile, progress is cropping up all over the region. Again, the news media simply does not cover it, and we always hear excuses why that might be the case. But if one just looks back, they will see that Egypt has just held its freest elections in history.

I had the opportunity to be in Lebanon about a month after this, in April. But this spring, on March 14, the Lebanese people rose up in a remarkable protest that was indeed televised throughout the world. We all saw it. After 30 years of occupation, Syria was forced to withdraw. Libya has given up its weapons of mass destruction program and is now cooperating with international inspectors. Kuwait has granted full political rights to women, and democracy is slowly beginning to take root in Saudi Arabia.

All of this has been made possible by the bravery, valor, and strength of our men and women in uniform. They deserve our deepest respect, gratitude, and our unwavering commitment to

the success of their mission. These young people heard the call of duty and they went to the frontlines to defend America.

Every day, at risk to their own lives, our soldiers are helping the Iraqis secure a democratic future. They are training Iraqi forces to defend and protect the Iraqi people, and real progress is being made. The Iraqis are getting stronger and they are getting more skilled at the dangerous work of facing down the terrorist enemy.

In the recent Tal Afar operation, Iraqi forces outnumbered coalition forces for the first time in a major engagement. Eleven Iraqi combat battalions were independently employed in Tal Afar, twice the number than in Fallujah operations this year. That is progress.

Currently, 116 Iraqi security forces are conducting operations, and Iraqi civilians are gaining confidence handling the matters there and in providing tips and information to help defeat the insurgents in the region.

Meanwhile, Iraq continues to build and improve its infrastructure. Again, you don't see it on the nightly news or on the 24-hour coverage. Since the liberation, coalition forces have helped complete over 4,000 reconstruction projects, including 3,400 public schools, 304 water projects, 257 fire and police stations, and 149 health facilities.

Under Saddam, Iraq's infrastructure was in shambles. Citizens were not allowed free access to the media or to communicate freely with one another. Saddam maintained his iron grip by keeping his people fearful and totally cut off from the outside world. But now that has changed. Slowly but surely, under the democratic leadership, Iraq is emerging as a modern country. Internet subscribers have risen from 5,000 to 196,000. It is opening up. Light is shining into the country and to the people of Iraq.

Now over 4.5 million Iraqis have telephone service, and that is a fourfold increase to what it was before the war. Under Saddam there was nothing such as that. There was no independent media. Today, Iraq has more than 100 newspapers and magazines. There are over 40 commercial television stations broadcasting to an eager Iraqi public. They are hearing and seeing things for the first times in their lives.

We hear the critics hurtle invective and level false charges against the administration. That is disappointing. We know some are, indeed, trying to rewrite history. We hear it on the Senate floor and we see it on the television news shows. This rewriting of history is wrong. It shows, to my mind, very little respect for the very things—the freedom, the democracy, the transparency, letting the light shine in—the sort of things our men and women are fighting for overseas.

At the same time that we hear this invective and these false charges, brave men and women—American and, as I just mentioned, Iraqi coalition forces,